

**FEATURING BEST PRACTICES  
OF STATE AGENCIES AND INSTITUTIONS OF THE  
COMMONWEALTH OF VIRGINIA**

**Administration and Health Planning  
District Epidemiologist Position**

**Virginia Department of Health  
Peninsula Health District  
implemented this best practice  
in July 1997**

*Qualifying under the  
Best Practices catalogue*

2 Acquire Resources  
22 Conduct research and development  
221 Conduct research  
  
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22 Conduct research and development  
223 Test and evaluate models and prototypes  
  
3 Provide Capabilities  
33 Provide administrative support services  
331 Information for decision-making

**Best Practice Summary  
(how it works, how you measure it)**

A trained epidemiologist was hired. Vital statistics, morbidity, and risk factor data are compiled and analyzed. Data needs are identified and studies are designed and conducted in order to address those needs. Students are trained in epidemiology and conducting epidemiological studies. Information is disseminated to community stakeholders on the local, state, and national level in the form of reports, presentations, and/or publications. Technical expertise and consulting on epidemiological matters is provided to health department staff as well as community organizations. End results are specific, targeted recommendations made to the community for program planning, intervention planning, and policy development.

## **Impact on the Process Organizational Performance (OUTCOMES)**

This new practice allows the district to identify needs and to plan according to what is going on in the local community. Numerous studies have been conducted or are being conducted producing recommendations for blood pressure screenings, targeting immunization needs, rabies education planning, injury prevention planning, cancer screenings, enteric disease control, allocation of resources by local governments, tuberculosis control in incarceration facilities, and immunization registries. This practice also establishes the health department as a consultative and expert resource on health issues in its community and the local, state, and national level.

## **Best Practice Qualification**

No other health district has a trained epidemiologist devoted to health planning. Currently, health departments do not have the means of compiling/collecting and analyzing local data to plan for targeted interventions. Community organizations do not have the guidance to plan for targeted interventions. Furthermore, this practice has made use of cutting edge technology for health planning, Geographic Information Systems (GIS). Presently, mapping of health data guides program planning and evaluation in the health department.

## **For Additional Information**

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